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Senate passes package supporting state parks

LANSING – Michigan’s state parks would receive more funding under three bills passed today by the Senate. The State Parks Initiative package is sponsored by Sens. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township; Jason Allen, R-Traverse City; and Tony Stamas, R-Midland.

Senate Bill 1279 would implement an income tax return check-off for donations to the state park system.

SB 1281 would create an awards program recognizing a state park of the year, state park volunteer of the year and state park employee of the year. SB 1280 would set in statute the formation of a State Parks Advisory Committee.

“Our state parks are the crown jewels of Michigan’s natural resources and we need to better manage those resources for our tourism visitors and our citizens,” said Birkholz, sponsor of SB 1280. “Having served on a parks advisory committee a number of years ago, I know that putting the advisory committee in state statute will be very effective, efficient and important to the continuation of our state parks system.”

The State Parks Advisory Committee would help guide the state park system by providing recommendations to the Legislature, governor and Natural Resources Commission on management, planning and improvements for state parks.

The committee also would be in charge of selecting the award recipients each year. The 17-member committee would be appointed by the director of the Department of Natural Resources with the advice and consent of the Natural Resources Commission.

“It’s important for Michigan’s residents to get involved in the clean-up and preservation of the state parks,” Birkholz said. “We want to provide them with ample opportunity and incentive, from the income tax check-off to volunteer awards, so our parks stay healthy for years to come.”

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